

TOWN OF FLORENCE

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 2022,
AT 6:00 P.M., VIRTUALLY.

SPECIAL NOTICE REGARDING PUBLIC MEETINGS

Due to the risks to public health caused by the possible spread of the COVID-19 virus at public gatherings, the Town of Florence has determined that public meetings will be held through technological means during the months of January and February 2022. Meetings will be open to the public through technological means. In reliance on, and in compliance with, the March 13, 2020 Opinion issued by Attorney General Mark Brnovich, and in conjunction with the Emergency Proclamation signed by Mayor Tara Walter, on March 18, 2020. The Town of Florence provides this special advance notice of the technological means through which public meetings may be accessed. While this special notice is in effect, public comment at meetings will only be accepted through written submissions, which may or may not be read aloud during meetings.

Members of the public may submit written comments relating to this meeting to Town Clerk Lisa Garcia by emailing lisa.garcia@florenceaz.gov at any time until one hour prior to the posted start time for the meeting. Please be sure to include your name and address for the record as well as the meeting date (and Agenda Item #, if applicable) in the subject of your email.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Walter called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Tara Walter, Michelle Cordes, John Anderson, Kristen Rodriguez, Judy Hughes, Arthur Neal, Johnie Mendoza

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Walter called for a moment of silence.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Walter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Town Council. Council rules limit public comment to three minutes. Individual Councilmembers may respond to criticism made by those commenting, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Council shall not discuss or take action on any

matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

There were no public comments.

PRESENTATIONS

Charles Whitlow Rodeo Grounds survey results.

Ms. Lisa Garcia, Deputy Town Manager/Town Clerk, stated that the QR code was available to the public and the survey was available on social media. She provided a presentation which outlined the following:

- Rodeo Survey
 - Council review survey: October 18, 2021
 - Develop QR Code: October 28, 2021
 - Data Collection: November 1, 2021 thru December 1, 2021
 - Survey analysis and report writing: December 1, 2021 thru January 1, 2022
 - Report to Council and post results: January 3, 2022
- Statistical overview
 - 72 people completed the survey
 - Voting Precincts Responding
 - Bella Vista(1)
 - Cactus Forest (5)
 - Copper Basin (1)
 - Florence North (3)
 - Florence South (6)
 - Poston Butte (9)
 - Portobello (1)
 - Tuthill (1)
 - Unknown or no response (45)
 - Gender
 - Female (14)
 - Male (13)
 - Unknown (25)
 - Age Range
 - 18-24 (1)
 - 25-34 (12)
 - 35-44 (12)
 - 45-54 (17)
 - 55-64 (15)
 - 65-74 (9)
 - 75 or older (6)
- Survey Results for following questions:
 - Do any children under 17 live with your household?
 - No: 40 (56%)
 - Yes: 32 (44%)

- How often do you visit the rodeo grounds?
 - Annually for Jr. Parada: 36 (50%)
 - Attend All Events: 17 (24%)
 - Have never visited: 11 (15%)
 - First Jr. Parada: 5 (7%)
 - Do not know location: 3 (4%)
- What is the primary reason you use the grounds?
 - 52 (76%) Spectators
 - 13 (18%) Do not use the facility
 - 4 (6%) Part of the event
 - 3 (4%) Child Participant
 - 0% Vendor
- If you seldom or do not use the grounds, what is the reason?
 - 43 (60%) Not enough events
 - 20 (28%) Poorly maintained
 - 13 (18%) Lack of facilities
 - 8 (11%) No Interest
 - 7 (10%) Do not enjoy rodeo
 - 4 (6%) To far
 - 0% Not Safe
- How do you rate the upkeep and maintenance on the grounds?
 - Fair: 32 (44%)
 - Poor: 28 (39%)
 - Good: 12 (17%)
- What should be improved at the grounds?
 - Events (dances, concerts, food truck nights, rodeo and non-rodeo type events)
 - Water improvements
 - Facility maintenance and improvements (bathrooms, bleachers, buildings, dry camping, announcer stand, PA system, arena)
 - Many more comments – all comments are included in the final report.
- Ideas for expanding the offerings at the rodeo grounds.
 - Barn (dances, concerts, FFA shows)
 - Drive-in movies
 - Equestrian activities (horsemanship, riding lessons,
 - Water system upgrades
 - RV hookups
 - Park-N-Swap
 - Events (concerts, balloon fest, rodeos, car races, festivals, fairs, car sows, tactor pulls)
 - Many more comments – all comments are included in the final report.
- What role should the Town assume?
 - Market activities and events: 39 (35%)
 - Allow 3rd Party to operate: 29 (27%)
 - Operate all events: 20 (18%)
 - Develop and Maintain Grounds: 14 (11%)
 - Maintain Grounds: 11 (9%)
- If Town had \$2 million, how should we spend?

- Improvements at current venue
- Town owned facilities
- New facilities
- Many more comments – all comments are included in the final report
- What type of recreation programs would you like the Town to offer?
 - Adult programming (sports, art, fitness)
 - Community Theater
 - Family Programming
 - Entertainment opportunities
 - Events on Main Street
 - Outdoor activities
 - Many more comments – all comments are included in the final report.
 - Community Services has been provided complete list.

Ms. Garcia emphasized that this is an opinion poll, and the citizen survey will also have questions pertaining to the rodeo grounds. She stated that when the Town conducts future surveys, they will narrow the questions and responses.

Councilmember Anderson inquired how the Town will respond to the survey. Several of the suggestions are for things that cannot be done at the rodeo grounds.

Ms. Garcia stated that the suggestions will be reviewed, and perhaps, some of the requested events can be held at alternate locations. An opinion poll is not the same as a survey. The Town will not do a full response to the poll as there were many respondents that were not Florence citizens.

Councilmember Anderson suggested that the Town responds to the comments and advise the public what is allowable at the rodeo grounds and what is not so the public doesn't think that their responses were not heard.

Vice-Mayor Cordes stated that the Town needs to educate the public on what the grounds can be used for. She asked the Town to be clear on how the rodeo grounds are operated, who is responsible for what, and what is and is not allowed.

Vice-Mayor Cordes stated that she is disappointed that only 72 people responded. It was a very hot topic in the community, and she is disappointed in the lack of engagement. She stated the importance of completing the survey if the public wants their voices to be heard.

Mayor Walter suggested that the stipulations of the contract be posted at the rodeo grounds so that the public is aware of what can and cannot be held or done at the grounds. If the Town partners with someone for the rodeo grounds, it needs to be clearly identified who is responsible for what for transparency purposes.

Mayor Walter stated that this poll was conducted in a very short amount of time and the citizen survey may have a better response.

Ms. Garcia stated that the goal was to gather information from people who were at the event.

Councilmember Anderson stated that many things may be worked out once the RFP is completed and the Town contracts out for those services.

Citizen Survey Update

Ms. Garcia provided a presentation, in which she outlined the following:

- Opening the Citizen Survey to all residents of Florence
 - Survey approved the questions for the survey on October 18, 2021
 - Invitation to all of Florence community to participate
 - Link: <https://polco.us/sfp8g2>
 - Can forward link to any residents to participate
 - Link will be on all Town social media accounts
 - If residents received a survey invitation in the mail, it is very important that they complete that version
 - It is standard setting for the open participation survey to require that respondents provide their email address and zip code before they can submit their response
 - The survey will close on January 11, 2022
 - Will present results of the survey to Council in March 2022

Mayor Walter inquired if there will be two separate results (for those who were sent a link to complete the survey and for those who participated in the open survey).

Ms. Garcia stated the company will compare both databases and provide a comparison of the two sets of results.

2022 Candidate Election Update

Ms. Garcia stated that the candidate packets are ready for the public. The Town will advertise the three open seats on Council (John Anderson, Michelle Cordes, Judy Hughes). Candidates can submit their packets from March 4, 2022 through April 4, 2022. The primary election date is August 2, 2022.

CONSENT: All items on the consent agenda will be handled by a single vote as part of the consent agenda unless a Councilmember or a member of the public objects at the time the agenda item is called.

Approval to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Pinal County Sheriff's Office to participate in the Pinal Vehicular Crimes Task Force.

Acceptance of the Development Impact Fee Audits for Fiscal Years 2018-2019 and 2020-2021.

Approval to enter into a contract with Rounds Consulting Group to complete a Target Industry Analysis (TIA) at a cost not to exceed \$40,000.

Ratification of the Ellison-Mills Contracting Contract for San Carlos Irrigation & Drainage District waterline expenditure overage, of \$776.71 above council authorized amount.

Approve charging a transaction fee in the amount of three percent (3%) for all non-utility related payments.

Accept the register of demands ending November 30, 2021, in the amount of \$2,268,879.49.

On motion of Councilmember Rodriguez, seconded by Vice-Mayor Cordes, and carried (7-0) to approve the Consent Agenda, as written.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ordinance No. 708-21:

Mayor Walter read Ordinance No. 708-21 by title only.

Second reading and Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING A ZONE CHANGE FROM SINGLE FAMILY RANCHETTE (R1-R) AND RURAL AGRICULTURE (RA-10) TO SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R1-18) FOR 801 W. ADAMSVILLE ROAD, ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBERS 200-05-004H AND 200-05-004G (PZ-21-44).

Ms. Maricella Benitez, Planner, stated that the public hearing and first reading were held on December 6, 2021. The request is for rezoning of two parcels of land which are owned by Tom Celaya. One property is zoned single family ranchette and the other is rural agricultural. The request is to rezone both to single family residential.

Ms. Benitez stated that the Town has not received any comments at the community meeting or public hearing, nor have there been any amendments to the application.

On motion of Councilmember Anderson, seconded by Councilmember Rodriguez, and carried (7-0) to adopt Ordinance No. 708-21.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of appointing Wilbur Freeman to serve as a citizen representative on the Town of Florence Public Safety Personnel Retirement System – Police and Fire Local Boards for a term of four years.

Ms. Catherine Wilson, Human Resources Director, stated that per State Statute, Council is to appoint two citizens to the boards and one of those must be the head of the Town's merit system (the Town Manager or his/her designee). The law requires these individuals to serve on both the Police and Fire Local Boards.

Ms. Wilsons stated the Mr. Freeman has served several terms on the Boards and has agreed to continue to serve.

Mayor Walter thanked Mr. Freeman for his service to the community.

On motion of Councilmember Anderson, seconded by Councilmember Rodriguez, and carried (7-0) to approve appointing Wilbur Freeman to serve as a citizen representative on the Town of Florence Public Safety Personnel Retirement System – Police and Fire Local Boards for a term of four years.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of Resolution No. 1807-22:

Mayor Walter read Resolution No. 1807-22 by title only.

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, ADOPTING THE RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS TO THE TOWN OF FLORENCE FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND CLASSIFICATION PLANS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Ms. Wilson stated that it is necessary to adjust the Town of Florence Classification and Compensation Plans to address the minimum wage increase the State of Arizona is implementing effective January 1st, 2022, which will increase the minimum wage from \$12.15 per hour to \$12.80 per hour. Grade 16 – Custodian will be moved from Grade 16 to Grade 19 to bring it into compliance. The starting wage will be slightly over \$13 per hour.

Ms. Wilson stated that it is also recommended to add the Procurement Officer, a full-time position, to the Compensation Plan at a Grade 52. The position will be responsible for handling procurement of RFP and CIP projects as well as other financial responsibilities within the Finance Department. This will alleviate some of the responsibility from the department directors.

Ms. Becki Jimenez, Finance Director, stated that the position will be funded by the following: 25% General Fund, 25% HURF, 25% Water Fund, and 25% Sewer Fund. She stated that the Public Works Administrative Assistant Position has been removed from Public Works and the funding from that position will be used in part to fund the Procurement Officer position. This position will write the scope of services and will help streamline the procurement process. She noted that this position is a higher grade than what was vacated because of the responsibility and knowledge base needed.

Councilmember Anderson stated that he is in support of this position.

Councilmember Anderson inquired if the increase to minimum wage will cost the Town approximately \$9,300.

Ms. Wilson stated that the budget will not be increased. The part time employees' wages will increase to \$12.80 per hour and the department directors will need to manage the increase within their respective budgets.

Mayor Walter inquired if the services provided to the community will be impacted, specifically because many of the services are provided by community services.

Ms. Wilson stated that the services will not be impacted.

On motion of Vice-Mayor Cordes, seconded by Councilmember Anderson, and carried (7-0) to adopt Resolution No. 1807-22.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of authorize staff to proceed with a Utility Rate Study.

Ms. Becki Jimenez, Finance Director, stated that the last rate study was done in 2017 and adopted in 2018. Studies are normally conducted every three to five years. It is staff's suggestion that a rate study needs to be completed due to the significant development patterns in Florence and the loss of wastewater revenues due to the closure of the Arizona State Department of Corrections facilities. Other changes include the use of ARPA Funds and excise tax monies being used to pay for some of the planned infrastructure. The Town also has two WIFA loans. The wastewater debt is being paid out for 20 years instead of being paid off faster, as anticipated.

Ms. Jimenez stated that the Town needs to be prepared for the future and how the rates will affect the Town. The change in rates affects all of the classifications of rate payers. The study will take approximately six to eight months to complete. The Town would issue an RFP for a consultant to perform the rate study, if approved.

Mr. Chris Salas, Public Works Director, is preparing a new CIP based on the growth and changes that are occurring and will be ready for the consultant.

Ms. Jimenez asked that Council consider the following options for this study:

1. Proceed with the current rate increase as projected, implementing either the 2021 or 2022 rates in April. The 2022 rates would be a two-increment hike.
2. Change the date of implementation to July 1, 2022, with either the 2021 or 2022 rates.
3. Do a utility rate study to evaluate existing conditions, rates, debt service, operational costs and capital outlay and then change rates based upon the new study.
4. Do not change rates.

Councilmember Anderson stated that a rate study is needed to determine what if any, rate increases are needed. He would like to see the results of the rate study before anything further is decided.

Councilmember Hughes stated that she is in support of the July 1 implementation and believes a rate change may be necessary.

Vice-Mayor Cordes stated that she is not in favor of rate increases, but a rate study should be completed first before a determination can be made if rate increases are needed.

Councilmember Rodriguez stated that a rate study needs to be done first before rate increases are done. She stated that the rates need to be consistent moving forward and recommended that they begin at the beginning of the calendar year, starting next January; however, this will be dependent on when the rate study is completed.

Mayor Walter asked that the fees not be raised until the next budgetary year. She is supportive of moving forward with a rate study and will allow for the public's feedback.

Ms. Jimenez stated that she understands why it is not favorable to raise the rates annually; however, it is to incrementally adjust the rates to what they should be, rather than hit them with one huge increase all at once. The rate consultant advises the Town on how the rates should be implemented. She has budgeted \$80,000 for a Utility Rate Study and anticipates several large projects in the near future with the anticipated growth spurt the Town is facing. It is important to ensure that the Town has funding for these projects.

On motion of Vice-Mayor Cordes, seconded by Councilmember Mendoza, and carried (7-0) to authorize staff to proceed with a Utility Rate Study.

Approval of purchasing a Pierce Enforcer fire apparatus and apparatus equipment from Hughes Fire Equipment, in an amount not to exceed \$750,000.

Mr. Jim Walter, Battalion Chief, stated that on October 18, 2021, the Council adopted Resolution No. 1789-21 which secured \$750,000 in financing to replace the 2002 Pierce reserve apparatus. Staff has had three design meetings with the manufacturer since the adoption of the resolution and have decided to go with a smaller chassis on this truck. This apparatus will contain the options currently in the frontline 2012 Pierce Velocity, but on a smaller, more maneuverable, more affordable chassis.

Battalion Chief Walter stated that in the current market, availability of parts and costs have been constantly fluctuating. The total project will include the purchase of the apparatus, trade-in/sale of the 2002 Pierce reserve apparatus, and the purchase of equipment inventory. As the market is changing, there is also a fluctuation in value between trade-in or private sale; however, the purchase price of the apparatus can only be guaranteed before proposed increases in February 2022 by Pierce. This will allow enough time to explore the best financial impact of trade-in vs. sale of the 2002 Pierce and purchasing equipment inventory.

Battalion Chief Walter stated that by completing this apparatus replacement process, the Fire Department will upgrade to newer more reliable equipment with a warranty, thus the department will have less repair costs. This apparatus will contain the same options and available technology of the Town's current frontline apparatus and standardize the fleet allowing the Department to maintain a consistent level of service to the citizens of Florence.

Vice-Mayor Cordes inquired what the anticipated life span of the apparatus will be.

Battalion Chief Walter stated that the anticipated life span of the apparatus will vary based on use, and maintenance; however, there is not set amount of time. Other equipment has expiration dates; however, this apparatus does not.

Councilmember Mendoza asked that a purchase of the apparatus be included in the report in the future.

Battalion Chief Walter stated that the apparatus is a custom build. He will be attending the design meeting and will forward a picture of what the apparatus will look like once it is available.

On motion of Vice-Mayor Cordes, seconded by Councilmember Mendoza, and carried (7-0) to purchase a Pierce Enforcer fire apparatus and apparatus equipment from Hughes Fire Equipment, in an amount not to exceed \$750,000.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Brent Billingsley, Town Manager, stated that the Town received a \$12,778 grant from the Leary's Firefighter Foundation, to purchase an additional washer extractor for the fire equipment. There will now be extractors in both stations.

Mr. Billingsley stated that studies have been completed for the area of Hunt Highway and Franklin Road and determining that a signal needs to be installed at that intersection. The Public Works Department has hired a consultant to develop options for this signal and the signal that is in front of the Florence Hospital on Hunt Highway. A new signal will need to be constructed because you are not able to connect the two signals together as they are too close in proximity to one another. This is scheduled to be completed before the new American Leadership Academy is completed.

Mr. Billingsley provided an update on the Well #5 drilling project. The pre-construction meeting was held in December 2021. Construction materials are in short supply which will cause the project to be delayed until February 2022.

Mr. Billingsley stated that revenue collections have increased this year in comparison to last year. The single-family permits have slowed down in comparison to last year, but will change with Mesquite Trails, Bisbee Ranch and other projects coming online.

Councilmember Anderson is concerned about the traffic light on Franklin Road and inquired why the ALA school did not keep their driveways together. It was discussed that the high school was going to share the driveway with their K-8 school. He stated that another traffic light would not be needed if they utilized the same driveway.

Mr. Billingsley stated that the initial plan was to build the high school behind the elementary school and share access; however, they opted to build on a parcel north of the elementary school. All access and circulation were analyzed through a Traffic Impact Study. He stated that he will have Mr. Chris Salas, Public Works Director, provide a report, based on the analysis to Council.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Community Development

Community Services

Courts

Finance

Fire

Police

Public Works

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Vice-Mayor Cordes stated that she has received complaints about vandalism and homelessness in the community. She stated that there is no system in place when someone is released. She requested the Town work with the prison partners to come up with some type of system to assist them. She stated that citizens do not feel safe on the streets, specifically due to the increase in vandalism.

Vice-Mayor Cordes would also like something to be done regarding the speeding on Hunt Highway. The drivers are speeding, and it is hard to get onto Hunt Highway because everyone is going too fast.

Mr. Bruce Walls, Police Chief, stated that his department is working on the concerns that Vice-Mayor Cordes discussed. They have had conversations with Core Civic and Pinal County regarding the release of prisoners. They are also working direct patrols to ensure the homeless population are identified and encouraged to move on. He also stated that they are working on the vandalism issue. The Department is doing the Complete Stop campaign on Hunt Highway and is working on the speeding issue in that area.

Councilmember Hughes stated that Community Development provided an in-depth report on the weed and trash issues in Florence. She stated that she is discouraged by the list. There are some issues that have remain unresolved and some cases are over a year old. She does not understand why the Clean and Lien program is not being utilized and why the Legal Department has not taken action.

Mr. Billingsley stated that the cases take quite some time to go through the process. He stated that there are three cases that have been submitted to the Legal Department recently.

Mr. Clifford L. Mattice, Town Attorney, stated that once the case is submitted to the Court, the property owner cleans the property, and the case is able to be dismissed. There are a couple of abatements that are being done in which a lien will be placed on the property. There is also one case that has been cleaned up and the case will be dismissed.

Councilmember Hughes inquired if there is a way for citizens to file complaints on the Town's website.

Mr. Billingsley stated that the software that the Town purchased for the citizen complaints did not work as suggested by providing the type of report that Council requested. Mr. Trenton Shaffer, IT Manager, and Ms. Garcia have been working on this project.

Ms. Garcia stated that staff will provide a presentation to Council on what the product can do and what type of reporting it will provide. She stated that the software is more like a help desk where a citizen can file a complaint.

The Department Reports were received and filed.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public comments.

CALL TO THE COUNCIL – CURRENT EVENTS ONLY

Councilmember Mendoza inquired when the new Circle K will open in Anthem. He stated that once the Circle K opens, there will be kids that will be crossing the street and traffic needs to be controlled. He stated that he supports Vice-Mayor Cordes' comments regarding Hunt Highway.

Councilmember Anderson stated that noise was very loud from the sheriff's firing range on New Year's Day. He would like the Town to file a formal complaint regarding the noise that is emitted from there and ask that the firing range be shut down.

Councilmember Anderson stated that people are speeding on American Way and suggested that speed bumps be added. He also asked that traffic control be done on American Way two hours each morning.

Councilmember Anderson thanked Mayor Walter for doing the State of the Town and stated that it was very interesting.

Councilmember Anderson inquired what the status is on the RFP for the rodeo.

Councilmember Anderson stated that he complained about the logos on the December 6, 2021 Council meeting and asked for an update.

Vice-Mayor Cordes stated that she agreed with Councilmember Anderson with regards to speeding throughout the Anthem community. She stated that speeding is an overall issue within the entire community.

Vice-Mayor Cordes stated that the Town needs to focus on traffic control. She asked the public to slow down and to be conscious of their surroundings.

Mayor Walter stated that the Community Services activity guides were mailed out to the community. She encouraged the public to participate in the many activities. She also asked the public to reach out the Community Services Department if they have any suggestions on events or activities that they would like to see occur.


Mayor Walter stated that she has been working on the State of the Town for quite some time. There were delays due to Covid-19 and outages, so they opted to combine 2020 and 2021. The Chamber of Commerce will also do a State of Florence in April 2022.

Mayor Walter stated that she is ready to meet in person and encouraged the Council to reach out to Ms. Garcia if they are ready to move forward with in person meetings.

The Mayor and Council wished the public a Happy New Year and hopes that 2022 is a better year.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Councilmember Anderson, seconded by Vice-Mayor Cordes, and carried (7-0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 p.m.




Tara Walter, Mayor

ATTEST:



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk

I certify that the following is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Florence Town Council meeting held on January 3, 2022, and that the meeting was duly called to order and that a quorum was present.



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk

